

Storage Container Issue

Nearly two years ago, when the Fire Marshall and Building Development Services made their presentation to Planning and Zoning Commissioners, they showed blocked fire lanes, gas valve cutoffs, electric cutoffs and water hook-ups for firefighting. There was a consensus among most in attendance that there were public health and safety issues with regard to the use of shipping containers for storage. Additionally mandated 5 foot setbacks from buildings (for fire fighting access) and setbacks from right of way and other neighboring buildings were not being followed as shown by the visual presentation.

Today I'm aware of over a dozen of the big box stores that have completely corrected all the safety issues pointed out in the P&Z presentation. In many cases container placement in Highway Commercial and General Retail areas have been corrected to have little or far less impact on their neighbors and meet setback requirements. Even the most vocal critic from the storage container industry obtained a city license to legally operate in Springfield.

In my view the proposed ordinance was flawed, particularly with regard to the responsible party language and signage limitations. It was intimidating in its length and needlessly attempted to register storage containers and trailer use in manufacturing and industrial areas. Registration would assist the utilization of limited Fire Marshall personnel. Major improvements were proposed over the existing law. Two examples, no site plan was required and 20 times the duration in residential areas for non-construction use was proposed.

I suggest the Community Involvement committee ask for a one year moratorium on enforcement of the existing storage container ordinance but require all health and safety (fire code) requirements be enforced by our Fire Department and Health Department in the interim. Council has more pressing issues to consider currently.

Hats off to Councilwoman Collette for her work and to the folks in the storage container industry who rolled-up their sleeves and helped inform their customers about safety concerns.

One final note. I don't know of one minute of overtime or additional cost other than postage and paper that went into this effort. Every staff member worked on this issue in addition to their regular duties without additional pay. Department head Nick Heatherly worked over Thanksgiving at home on a draft and Evelyn Honea, you have really applied yourself to this issue. Thanks

I'm sorry I cannot be in attendance at the Community Involvement Committee meeting today, but I'm attending the Management Team meeting finalizing our plans for the ninth annual Rock N Ribs BBQ Festival to be held April 19th. Come see us at the South Bass Pro parking lot if you love BBQ and music. Help support the five local children's charities this community event benefits. Gary Deaver